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Work-life Balance Practices among Irish Hotel Employees and Implications for HRM

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1. Introduction

The hotel industry is a very important sector which makes a major contribution to economic development in Ireland (O'Neill *et al.*, 2009). Tourism is a people-centred industry where staff are an integral part of the consumer experience. Therefore, tourism must look to the employees to serve as a principal source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1997, Failte Ireland 2005, p. 4). However, people management practices and HRM in tourism and hospitality do not seem to show the significance of effective HRM (Blomme *et al.*, 2009, Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010). In a worldwide survey of two-hundred and forty-three lodging managers Enz (2009) found that issues for them were attraction, retention, training and morale of staff.

Flexible work arrangements involve modifying work routines and timetables on a daily, weekly or longer term (Stavrou and Ierodiakonou, 2011; Stavrou, 2005). Many flexible work programmes benefit women as they enable them to achieve a balance between work and family (Brewer, 2000; Crompton, 2002; Stavrou and Ierodiakonou, 2011). However, there are other drivers of flexible work arrangements such as lifestyle choices (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011; Eckhof *et al.*, 2007).

Due to increasing concerns about work-life balance matters organisations are offering various initiatives to help employees balance work demands with family, home and other life commitments (Beauregard, 2014; Kersley *et al.*, 2005; US Bureau of Labor, 2011). In relation to the hospitality industry many establishments lack family-supportive work environments which are necessary for both the benefit of the employee and the organisation (Cullen and McLaughlin, 2006, Deery, 2008, Farrell, 2012). It has been found that employees in the hospitality industry experience challenges in achieving a work-life balance (Karatepe and Magajc, 2008, Lewis, 2003). There can be

a culture of long hours and presenteeism attached to many jobs (Cullen and Mc Laughlin, 2006; Deery, 2008, Harris *et al.*, 2007).

There is a dearth of research in relation to work-family balance (Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010; O'Neill, 2011). Karatepe (2008) and Mulvaney *et al.* (2006) found that in the hospitality management literature there is lack of research relating to work-family facilitation. Lucas and Deery (2004, p. 470) highlighted how most hospitality research is based on quantitative analysis and the "relatively small amount of research drawn from employees as opposed to managers, suggests there is considerable scope to undertake more employee-based studies". The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the issue of work-family balance in the Irish hotel sector from an employee perspective with implications for HRM. According to Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011 citing Cousins and Tang (2004) and Dikkers *et al* (2007) the majority of work-life research deals with parental responsibilities for young children. This study will incorporate other factors for availing of work-life programmes. Similarly, Eikhof *et al.*, (2007, p. 331) state "Life is too readily equated with care responsibilities, and more precisely, with female care responsibilities" so this study will enlarge the conceptualisation of personal life to include leisure, health reasons and educational training. This concurs with Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011 p. 186 who make the point " Thus, in operationalising "life" work-life research needs to attend to all significant aspects of life, including education, unpaid domestic and care work, as well as leisure".

2. Human Resources in the Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is a people-centred industry where people are essential to all aspects of the service sequence (Failte Ireland, 2005). The development of people is a central element in human resource management (Connolly and McGing, 2007). In an increasingly competitive environment human resources can be a source of competitive advantage. (Boxall and Purcell, 2003, Boxall, Ang and Bartram, 2011). In relation to HRM in hospitality, according to Davidson *et al.*, 2011, p.3 (citing Warech and Tracey, 2004 and Rodwell and Teo, 2000) from an examination of HR practices and shareholder values it has been found that some HR practices assist firms achieve their strategic objectives.

There is some evidence that established HR departments with innovative practices are only to be found in the larger hotels with a dearth of HR practices to be found in the smaller hotels (Hoque,

2000). Head and Lucas (2004) refer to the need for improved HRM in the hospitality industry with pockets of good practice to be found. Improved HR practices have been linked to better performance (Ployhart and Moliterno, 2011). Now work-life balance programmes that satisfy criteria of cost efficiency, motivational effectiveness and commitment are being used to optimise employee commitment, increase employee satisfaction and performance (Boxall, Ang and Bartram, 2011). Furthermore there is evidence that HR advances organisational goals (Allen, Ericksen and Collins, 2013).

3. Work-life balance and HRM

The 1991 General Social Survey randomly selected workers in the United States and assessed the impact of family-responsive human resource policies, such as parental leave, flexible schedules, and child care assistance on organisational attachment. Employees who had access to family-responsive policies showed significantly greater organisational commitment and showed significantly lower intention to quit their jobs. In addition, childcare information referral had a greater impact on affective commitment among employees eligible for that benefit. The practical implication of the study for human resource management professionals is that providing comprehensive family-friendly policies may have a positive impact beyond the individual employees who tap these benefits (Grover and Crooker, 1995, p.1-2). A study of a national survey of employees measuring the impact of family-responsive fringe benefits on affective commitment to the organisation (Grover and Crooker, 1995, p. 7) found that people are more attached to organisations that offer family-friendly policies, regardless of the extent to which the people might personally benefit from the policies. Perry-Smith and Blum (2000, p. 1114) investigated the relationship between bundles of work-family policies and organisational performance. They found that establishments with a greater number of work-family policies have higher levels of organisational performance, market performance and profit sales growth. Work-family bundles may promote interest in organisations as they have a symbolic value for employees. In addition they may be a source of competitive advantage in a business climate in which their adoption is limited. They signal the need to explore the extent to which work-family bundles are part of a broader innovative HR system. Beauregard and Henry (2009) found that work-life balance practices are often linked to positive job-related attitudes, engagement in high quality management practices and increased employee interest in the establishment.

An organisation can be said to have a supportive organisational culture when it facilitates peer and supervisor support, when it enables career progression without presenteeism and working long hours, when work-home friendly approaches are visible and when it enables employees to make effective use of work-home practices (Frone, 2003; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2006 and Sok *et al.*, 2014).

4. Work-life balance supports

There appears to be no definition of what accounts for a work-life balance practice. The term usually refers to one of the following: flexible work options; family or personal leave; and organisational support for dependent care (Estes and Michael, 2005). Consequently these practices include flexible work hours such as flextime, which enables employees to vary their start and finishing time provided a certain number of hours are worked; compressed work week, in which employees work a full week's worth of hours in four days and take the fifth off; working from home (telework); sharing a full-time job between two employees (job-sharing); family-leave programmes (e.g. parental leave, adoption leave, compassionate leave); onsite childcare; and financial and/or informational assistance with childcare and eldercare services (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). According to Sok *et al.* (2014, p. 462) flexible work-home arrangements include flexible schedules such as compressed working weeks, part-time work, telecommuting and leave programmes (e.g. parental leave, care leave), all of which facilitate the management of time pressures (Kossek, 1999; Lee *et al.*, 2002).

5. Work-family interface and conflict

Work-family conflict and family-work conflict can arise. Work-family conflict refers to “a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of time devoted to, and strain caused by, the job, interfere with performing family-related responsibilities”, and family-work conflict refers to “a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of time devoted to, and strain caused by, the family interfere with performing work-related responsibilities” (Netemeyer *et al.*, 1996, p. 401). While conflict is a common element in life, certain levels of work and family conflict can have negative consequences for both (Hsieh and Eggers, 2010). In hospitality a significant factor in work-

family pressure is time-based conflict (Magnini, 2009). The main element of time-based conflict is where time given to one role makes it difficult to carry out another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Negative effects of time-based conflict such as a lessening in productivity have been noted (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2005). According to Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton (2000) there is a link between increases in conflict and lower job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job performance, as well as increases in turnover intention and absenteeism. In a study involving 1,200 food service managers, Ghiselli, La Lopa and Bai (2001) found that longer working hours caused disruption in their lives.

6. Benefits of flexible working arrangements

Workplace flexibility can offset some of the negative effects of working long, non-standard hours typical of the hospitality industry (Staines and Pleck, 2007). In relation to work and family, certain conflicts can arise such as absenteeism, negative mental and physical health (Frone *et al.*, 1997, Hsieh *et al.* 2009, Tromp and Blomme, 2012). It is argued that there needs to be a certain separation between work and family while at the same time allowing for interchange between them (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000). Frone *et al.*, (1997) tested Frone *et al.*'s (1992) model of work/family interface which shows that work at times conflicts with family and *vice versa*.

The literature refers to the emotional labour and stress characteristics of the hospitality industry (Deery and Jago, 2009; Karatepe and Bektashi, 2008; Karatepe and Kilic, 2007). There can be a high incidence of exhaustion and job burnout in the latter resulting in high turnover (Deery, 2008; Wang and Wallumbwa, 2007). Inflexible shift work can cause a lack of balance between work and family (Root and Wooten, 2008). Some employers understand the HR benefits of work-life balance programmes and have started to engage with the same (Xiao and O' Neill, 2010). In relation to factors that can positively affect work-life balance, Deery and Jago (2009) mention more use of flexible work practices such as flexible scheduling, having access to both paid and unpaid leave and job sharing. However, Kelly *et al.*, (2011) make the point that research has not proved that new workplace policies actually change employees experience of work-family conflict, nor have studies concluded that these programmes increase employees' sense of flexibility.

7. Work-family balance in hotels

According to Doherty (2004) previous research shows there are some flexible work options for people working at operational level but this is not the case at management level. The latter found that most of the women needed flexibility because of childcare commitments. Deery (2008) made recommendations for the Australian hospitality industry which included flexible working hours, job sharing, various types of leave such as carer's leave and family-friendly practices. According to DiPietro *et al.*, (2004) in research of fast food restaurants it was found that flexible working hours was one of the reasons given to encourage employees to stay. Namasivayam and Zhao (2007) did a study examining the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC), job satisfaction (JS) and organisational commitment (OC). They found that WFC related negatively to JS, but this is not the case if the employee is very committed to the organisation. Cleveland *et al.*, (2007) conducted research on three hotel groups: new employee entrants, hotel managers and their spouses. It was found that time demands and the need to be available at all times was a contributing factor to their level of stress. O' Neill (2011, p. 878) in a focus group study of hospitality management students refers to the working time practices which are "long, unpredictable and non-standard". In relation to their study of the Korean hotel industry, Choi and Kim (2012, p. 1023) proposed that establishments invest more in "flexible work schedules, regular working hours, family-friendly programmes, and additional useful benefits and support related to family". Wong and Ko (2009, p. 202) in their study of employees' perceptions of work-life balance issues propose an effective management system and culture that enables employees to deal more effectively with their "personal and family matters". The latter includes "Providing workplace support on family matters" and "Provide more free time and increase flexibility on work schedule". In work there is more emphasis on productivity and efficiency which is tending to obscure other values (Crompton *et al.*, 2007, Gambles, *et al.*, , 2007). According to Burris (1993, p. 19) some change is needed to accommodate work and family:

"Some of the needed changes are obvious: greater scheduling flexibility, more available and affordable childcare, more options for viable part time work for men and women, more generous maternity and paternity leaves."

O'Connor (2003) found that achieving a work-life balance was ranked as the number one personal challenge facing Irish managers. Also, Clinch *et al.* (2002) found that Irish people attached high importance to family relationships. The importance of benefits for employees has been highlighted as a recruitment tool (Dulebohn *et al.*, 2009). The role of a positive organisational culture which facilitates work-life balance can lead to positive effects on employee performance (Root and

Wooten, 2008; Ten Brummelhuis and Van Der Lippe, 2010). A study conducted by Lewis (2011) suggested that work-life balance initiatives at the Italian hotel studied were not experienced as such by employees. Nevertheless, according to employees, work-life balance factors clearly influence them as they reflect the underlying factors which can positively affect their lives. (Di Nicola and Rosati, 2008).

The research questions (RQ) for this research therefore were:

- RQ1 What are the principal types of working time arrangements available to employees?
- RQ2 Are there other factors motivating employees to take up working time arrangements besides family commitments?
- RQ3 To what extent are employees achieving a balance between work and family?
- RQ4 What level of organisational support is available to employees in terms of work assistance, care supports and health supports in order to achieve work-life balance?
- RQ5 Is there a link between work-life balance supports and other HRM practices such as company benefits?

8. Research Procedure

This particular article presents findings from part of a larger study on work flexibility and work-family balance (Farrell, 2012). The study included a survey of managers and employees. The latter included employees of a 5 Star, 4 Star and 3 Star unionised hotel group, a non-unionised hotel group and two family-run hotels, one a 4 Star and the other a 3 Star hotel (Table 1).

Table 1 Number of respondents

Type of Hotel	Total employed	Number of respondents
F3 (3* family run)	147	62
F4 (4* family run)	180	44
NU3 (Non-unionised 3*)	100	21
NU4 (Non-unionised 4*)	46	17
NU5 (Non-unionised 5*)	70	20
U3 (Unionised 3*)	40	13

U4 (Unionised 4*)	200	20
U5 (Unionised 5*)	218	49
Total	1001	246

Just over two thirds of respondents were female and the balance were male (Table 2). Three quarters of respondents were in the 20-39 years age group. Some 64% of respondents were between 1-3 years in their current employment (Table 2).

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Gender	Male 31%	Female 69%			100%
Age group	16-19 years 7%	20-39 years 75%	40-59 years 16 %	Over 60 years 2%	100%
Length of time in current employment	1 year 33%	1-3 years 31%	4-6 years 17%	7 + years 19%	100%

Reliability of the data was improved by surveying a large cohort of employees who could respond anonymously. The questionnaire was pre-tested prior to launch with a cross-section of industry personnel. First, three HR managers were asked their advice regarding wording of questions to ensure that the terms used would be understood by employees. Additionally, the questionnaire was piloted with a cohort of hospitality students. This resulted in amendments being made in choice of language and structure of questions. Before the survey was carried out, its academic purpose was explained to the HR manager in each hotel. Questionnaires were sent out to the relevant HR manager who in turn distributed them to employees. A covering letter was included with each questionnaire with the logo of the Irish Hotel and Catering Institute, the representative body for hotel managers in Ireland.

The questionnaire was distributed to employees with their pay slip and an envelope for reply was enclosed. They were also asked to return it in a sealed envelope and place it in a box convenient to the HR manager's office. A difficulty experienced was that a lot of staff are casual and do not work every day. This resulted in a relatively lower response rate. The response rate was 22% which

included two-hundred and forty-six valid questionnaires. This is considered to be within the norm for a postal questionnaire (Murphy, 1997).

The survey instrument

The survey was made up of twenty seven questions. Section A dealt with current employment details such as work arrangement and preferred work arrangement. Section B dealt with working time arrangements and had four questions. Section C dealt with other flexible work practices while section D covered work-life balance and had three questions. Section E covered personal details such as age and education and had six questions. Section F dealt with unionised hotels and had five questions. The questions on work-life balance issues were based on a published survey conducted by the Industrial Statistics Unit; Trinity College Dublin in 2002, as they satisfied the research aims (Industrial Statistics Unit, 2002).

9. Data Analysis

The statistical package SPSS 17.00 was used. Frequency charts, cross tabulations, significance tests and regression analysis were used.

10. Findings and Discussion

RQ1 What are the principal types of working time arrangements available to employees?

Table 3 showed that while 77% of employees worked full time, it was the preferred working arrangement of 67% of the total number of employees surveyed. 2% of employees were job sharing but it was the preferred working arrangement of 11% of all employees surveyed. Approximately, one third of employees stated that their preferred working time arrangements were part-time work or job share. This could be an indication of changing priorities for employees where life outside work is assuming greater significance (Craig *et al.*, 2010, Lewis, 2011). The hospitality industry is a labour intensive industry and is likely to remain so as automation is not likely to effect the service transactions in any significant way. The industry has had the image of being a difficult working environment and this leads to conflict and problems with recruitment, retention and health issues (Di Pietro *et al.*, 2004; Magnini, 2009; O'Neill, 2011; Choi and Kim, 2012). A more balanced lifestyle is a principal reason for availing of flexible work arrangements

(Stavrou and Ierodiakonou, 2011; Hilbrecht *et al.*, 2008). Flexible work arrangements are one way of responding to employees' work life balance issues and negative job outcomes such as tardiness, absence and turnover are reduced for those with access to it. (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011, citing Grover and Crooker, 1995, Narayanan and Nath 1982; Pierce and Newstrom, 1983).

Table 3: Employees' Working Time Arrangements (WTA) and Employees' Preferred Working Time Arrangements (WTA)

	Employees' WTA (N=246)	Employees' preferred WTA (N=245)
Full-time	77%	67%
Part-time	20 %	21%
Job-share	2 %	11%
Flex-time	1%	1%

RQ2 Are there other factors motivating employees to take up working time arrangements besides family commitments?

The number one reason given for availing of work-family balance arrangements was time for educational training. Childcare concerns were the second most important reason given by employees for the demand for work-life balance arrangements (Table 4). Ozbilgin *et al.* (2011) note the fact that in much literature there is the assumption that life often stands for domestic and family life and there are many studies that that just deal with work-family matters (e.g. Carlson et al., 2000; Fagnani and Letablier, 2004; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). There can be the omission of other non-work factors and we see the case here of educational training being the primary reason for uptake of work-life balance arrangements. Time for leisure was also mentioned by 23% of respondents as a reason for taking up working-time arrangements.

Table 4 Reasons why Employees Take up Working Time Arrangements (N=94)

Percentage Yes

To combine work with the care of children or dependents	26
To have more leisure time	23
To have more time for educational or vocational training	31
For health reasons	10
Employees could not find a full-time job	2
A source of supplementary income	10
For reasons of sociability	6

RQ3 To what extent are employees achieving a balance between work and family?

Twenty nine per cent of respondents agreed strongly and thirty six per cent agreed that their family does not suffer as a result of working hours. Half of employees either agreed strongly or agreed that putting in extra hours helps career prospects (Table 5). Thirty eight per cent of employees were responsible for the care of other people, twenty three percent were responsible for the care of children and thirteen per cent for the care of parents (Table 6). The results showed that employees had considerable caring commitments. There is a consensus that working women have to manage the dearth of time within the family (Baxter, 2002; Maher *et al.*, 2008). Facilitating employees' work arrangements to enable them to care for their families is a very practical and economical way of dealing with the issue of care. Hotel managers need to appreciate the elements involved in helping employees balance work and family (Choi and Kim, 2012, O'Neill, 2011).

Table 5: Employees' Perspective on Family-friendly/Work-life Balance Issues

I have to work beyond official hours to keep up with my workload (N=204)

	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	10

Agree	19
Unsure	17
Disagree	40
Disagree strongly	14
I have been able to balance home and work life without hindering my career progression (N=207)	
	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	19
Agree	45
Unsure	19
Disagree	13
Disagree strongly	4

My life and commitments beyond work are respected by my colleagues (N=207)

	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	22
Agree	52
Unsure	15
Disagree	9
Disagree strongly	4

Part-time working slows down career progression (N=202)

	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	15
Agree	22
Unsure	30
Disagree	27
Disagree strongly	5

My family does not suffer as a result of my working hours (N=224)

	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	29
Agree	36

Unsure	15
Disagree	14
Disagree strongly	5
Putting in extra hours helps career prospects (N=216)	
	<i>Percentage</i>
Agree strongly	19
Agree	31
Unsure	20
Disagree	22
Disagree strongly	9

Table 6: Employees' Perspective on other Responsibilities (N=227)

	<i>Percentage Yes</i>
Employees pursuing an educational qualification	30
Employees responsible for the care of other people	38
Employees responsible for the care of children	23
Employees responsible for the care of parents	13
Employees responsible for the care of relatives	7

RQ 4 What level of organisational support is available to employees in terms of work assistance, care supports and health supports in order to achieve work-life balance?

Table 7 shows the composite figure of work/life balance supports available for employees. There was a considerable range varying from hotels with no supports, hotels with one support and hotels with all eight supports available. The supports available are as follows: employee assistance programmes, staff counselling services, an education scheme, childcare supports, career planning and guidance, pre-retirement advice and support, stress management courses and other supports. The majority of hotels had no supports for employees and this may be due to lack of knowledge on the part of employees regarding what is available (Lewis, 2011). Also, employers may not be providing work/life balance supports due to lack of demand. These findings could be a reflection of poor communication as well as a need for management training regarding employee need for work/life balance supports.

Table 7: Composite Number of Work/Life Balance Supports According to Employees (N=244)

Work/life Balance Supports	Yes percentage
None	63
1.00	12
2.00	3
3.00	4
4.00	1
5.00	1
6.00	5
7.00	7
8.00	4

Total	100
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The importance of social support which is defined as “interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental aid, information or appraisal” (Carlson and Perrew, 1999, p. 514) cannot be underestimated. Social supports may enhance work-family balance aiding employees with difficulties experienced with both the family role and the work role (Karatepe, 2010; Karatepe and Kilic, 2007). It is important to provide a family supportive work environment. Supports for work-family balance could be put in place for employees such as time management, stress management and home management courses. Cullen and McLaughlin (2006) refer to the notion of “presenteeism”, which can be an issue in hotels. A tension exists between organisational policies that are presented as family-friendly and work practices that assume dedicated employees work long hours (Deery, 2008, Harris *et al.*, 2007). It would be important to foster a culture whereby employees are rewarded for their work achievements rather than for “presenteeism”. Work-family programmes need to be integrated into the overall strategic plan for the organisation. There must be a sense of commitment starting with top management and working its way down to operational level. Managers need training in the importance and implementation of family-friendly work practices.

The results showed that there were fewer work-life balance supports available in hotels in the higher star category. Lewis, (2011) found contradictions between policies that HR managers claim exist and policies employees perceive as existing. Other studies found that employers mentioned insufficient demand as the main factor for not providing family-friendly/work-life balance arrangements (Fisher, 2000; Poelmans *et al.*, 2003).

People work best when there is a balance between work and life (Cullen and McLoughlin, 2006; Deery, 2008, Farrell, 2012) However, this has to be reconciled with employers’ financial and business targets. There are inherent costs involved in being a flexible employer. However, the overall cost of replacing an employee involves recruitment, selection, training and some temporary cover. It may make more business sense to accommodate the employee’s work demands, rather than lose all that talent and skills. A positive organisational culture which is family-friendly can have a positive effect on performance (Root and Wooten, 2008, Ten Brummelhuis and Van Der Lippe, 2010).

RQ 5 Is there a link between work-life balance supports and other HRM practices such as company benefits?

Table 8 below shows the employee regression equation for both functional flexibility (team-working, multiskilling) and work-life balance supports. In both cases the regression was significant ($p < .05$). For functional flexibility, also, two variables were significant, i.e. job description ($p < .05$) and company benefits available ($p < .05$). This shows that there is more functional flexibility at management level. This is in keeping with the flexible firm thesis that functional flexibility is more likely to be developed with core workers (Atkinson, 1984).

Table 8 : Multiple Regression of Functional Flexibility and Work-life Balance Supports by Company Characteristics, HRM Practices and Individual Characteristics according to significance at $p < .05^*$, $p < .1^{}$**

Organisational Factors Dependent Variables Standardised Beta		
	Functional flexibility	Work-life balance supports
Company characteristics		
Family ownership	.078	-.140
Hotel classification	.030	-.173*
Individual characteristics		
Age	-.076	.044
Gender	-.027	-.030
Highest educational qualification	-.044	-.040

Pursuing an educational qualification	-.015	-.082
Job description	-.156*	.096
Length of time in present employment	-.083	.095
HRM practices		
Company benefits available	.253*	.370*
Whether the organisation is unionised	.068	.098
R	.336*	.419*
R Square	.113	.175

*P<.05

**P<.1

More company benefits and more work-life balance supports are found together. In conclusion, company benefits was not associated with numerical flexibility, but company benefits were associated with functional flexibility and work-life balance supports. This would suggest an integrated approach to human resource management, whereby some companies engage in a contemporary employee-focused approach, whereas other companies tend to be more traditional. This could echo Enz (2009, p.14) "Innovation in human resource management is needed to gain a sustainable competitive advantage...". It is important for the hotel industry to keep pace with HR development and in particular the emphasis on human capital management (Connolly and McGing, 2007, Nankervis *et al.*, 2008). Employers in the hospitality industry need to invest in people as echoed by a recent report: "Employers stand to save money and improve profitability and performance by looking at measures to invest in staff and retain their skills, identify appropriate training to make staff more proficient, and reduce skills gaps" (www.people1st.co.uk p. 21). When

there is a supportive culture for work-home balance human resource practitioners can respond more effectively to the same. HR managers could develop tools to enhance flexibility so as to diminish “negative work-home interference or to strengthen positive work-home interference” (Sok *et al.*, 2014, p. 458.).

11. Implications for Management

The human resource domain has an important role to play in determining where flexibility can make the optimum contribution. Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011 citing (Rothbard *et al.*, (2005, p. 190) “Identify the fit between organisational policy and individual desire to segment work and life as having significant consequences for the job satisfaction and motivation of workers”. It is important to promote the mutual benefits of flexibility for the employee and the employer. Effective leadership from management is required to create that positive organisational culture which facilitates the creation and uptake of work-family balance programmes. This would ensure that those applying for flexible work arrangements would not be viewed as less committed to their work than others. There may be perceptions that taking time off work to deal with commitments outside work may impact negatively on one’s career prospects and incur resentment from fellow employees (Beauregard, 2011, p. 220). Work-family balance policies need to be integrated into the overall strategic plan for the organisation. There must be a sense of commitment starting with top management and working its way down to operational level. These flexible policies need to be compatible with overall business aims (Boxall, Ang and Bartram, 2011).

12. Conclusion

The study advances the literature on the link between work-life balance programmes and other HRM practices such as company benefits and functional flexibility (Grover and Crooker, 1995; Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000, Beauregard and Henry, 2009). The study also expands the traditional conception of life” to cover aspects of life beyond domestic life” (Ozbilgin *et al.*, 2011, p. 190). We see that educational reasons and time for leisure were significant drivers of work-life balance arrangements. Hotels need to put in place more organisational supports for employees to achieve a better balance between work and life (Boxall, Ang and Bartram, 2011).

Limitations and suggestions for further research

Although this study made some contribution to the literature, it is important to recognise that the study had some limitations. First the data were gathered at a single point in time and thus causal inferences need to be viewed with caution. Secondly, the sample size was small and limited to employees in eight hotels. Eventhough the hotels chosen were representative of the hotel industry i.e. a unionised group, a non-unionised group and two family run hotels, further research is needed to generalise for the larger hospitality industry. Nevertheless the study can serve as a first step in researching further the link between work-home programmes and other HRM practices and the study indicates that this relation exists in the Irish hotel industry. Thirdly, the hospitality industry employs a large number of casual workers and it could be interesting to compare work-family balance perceptions and practices between casual employees and full-time employees. Finally, it could be insightful to look more closely at the effects of star rating and family ownership on work-family balance using qualitative methods.

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